

State of the Hack

November 8th, 2016

This is a quick down and dirty document, not meant to be considered the be-all-end-all of anything. I hope there is some value in some of my thoughts. Feel free to ignore it all as there are plenty of ways to be successful ignoring ALL of the concepts below ;-)

For those who (for some reason) believe that only high selling people can provide great insight into the successful path, I'll share my numbers below. However, let me say up front that I *learn every day*.

I learn things that work, things that didn't work (i.e. - I failed) and things that didn't move the needle...for ME.

That, I think, is an important clarification. The 'for me' part.

You see, I've done the free first book giveaway (5,820) and while I made the money I lost (not the 5,280 lost sales, only the sales I could track on the days they were free), and I'm sure a little more, it didn't move the needle on other books in the series appreciably ... for me. But, I just read a post in the 20Books group from Amy Hopkins who is having success going wide for her books with Permafree.

I think this is great.

I'm a huge proponent that there are multiple ways up the mountain and my way, her way or another successful author's way may not be YOUR way. I release fast, that doesn't mean it is the only way. It also doesn't mean you can't learn something if you (for whatever reason) do not write fast. However, I'm not going to apologize for my success, for the speed of my publication, for the stress it might cause as there is *no reason* you need to follow my path.

However, for those that want to hear about my path? Well, I've got a story for you...and it goes something like this:

First book released - November 2, 2015 (1 year, 6 days ago).

Titles out: 13 books, 2 novellas, 2 collaborations, 3 omnibuses and part of 2 anthologies. Book 14 should be out tomorrow night... Very first word in this latest book? "F##K".

- Highest rank of any book in my series: My Ride is a Bitch - The Kurtherian

- Gambit - Ranked #74 in the store for a couple of hours.
- Highest overnight rank as an Author: #91 (October 30th, 2016)
- Present (this hour) rank: #128
- Top 500 ranked author since July 17th, 2016
- Top 200 ranked author since Oct 08th, 2016

Highest amount of KENP in one month: October, 2016 (10,429,022)

Total amount of months I have received one or more (location based) KENP All*Star bonuses: 4 (US and UK each time)

Highest amount of books sold in a month: October, 2016 (17,592)

- Price of first book: \$2.99
- Price of the rest of the series: \$3.99
- Price of the Omnibuses (3 books per): \$5.99
- Price of Novella's: \$0.99
- Price of Anthologies are set by those who created them (Patrice Fitzgerald, Hayley Lawson).
- I've not yet sold 11,000 copies of book 01. (I've had over 4.8 million pages read)
Total income (NET) book 01? \$40,946.00 Total GROSS income to date all books? Approximately \$500,000

Lowest Gross Sales of any one month? Approximately \$440.00

Highest Gross Sales of any one month? Approximately \$110,000

Lifetime Value of each new book 01 reader: (After reduction for Read Through and Amazon 30%) Approximately \$20.94. This will go up to approximately \$22.09 after book #14 release).

Rules I didn't know about or I had heard about, and ignored:

- Don't put f*Bombs in your books.
- Don't write more than 4 books in a year.
- Don't tell, show.
- Don't write more than (3,4,6 or 8) in a series...You Can't Sell.
- Write to market (mind you, this concept came along a LOT later than when I started my mashup).
- Only have professional covers.
- You MUST have professional editing.
- You need an email list. (I have one, but I don't do much but inform those on it when the book is coming out for the \$0.99 24 hour release. Then it goes up to full price. I never had much of one for my early success (Income was over \$20,000 before I had a halfway decent email list).

- Don't reply to Reviews (kind of a dodge on this one. I did respond... Then went with not responding after seeing the 'rule' ...Then said screw it and copied reviews into the back of two of my books and answered them there.)
- Only support books you have personally read.
- Don't listen to your fans, write what YOU want to write without concern about their reactions.
- Bookbub is the way to be successful (Didn't so much ignore this as only tried 1/2 the times I could and don't really try hard, plus, I've been turned down for those times I tried - so it's kinda 'meh').

A few things I think I've learned over the last year.

- A lot of commonly held beliefs about trad pub people are either misinformed or broad strokes painting a fair amount of Trad Pub with an ugly brush that is uncalled for.
- The most powerful engagement tool I know is the Author Notes in the back of the book and Facebook.
- I don't know of many authors who use the Author's Page Forum on Amazon nearly as much as they could.
- Author Names are the most effective (for me) tool for Amazon Ad keywords (the ads folks, not the keywords in your book blurbs).
- I can't scale Facebook ads beyond \$85.00 to \$100.00 a day. Total Ad Spend for Facebook since Dec 1, 2015: \$11,002.92. Reusing working ads (when they deplete a target market (or oversaturate) is to change the targeting, but nothing else. This keeps all of the great comments from fans in the ads making them much more successful). Cheapest FB Ad CPC \$0.08-Targeting Authors.
- On Amazon Marketing Services (AMS) - Using ads for books later in the series DOES catch clicks. Thus (I believe) driving new readers back to book 01. My average CPC on AMS is between \$0.17 and \$0.45. Cheapest? \$0.05 but very few impressions.
- Dragon Dictation works for me when I do scenes with a lot of dialogue. I can't use it for action scenes (personal constraint - others can).
- Your Author Rank IS helpful in marketing on Amazon. Not just your Book Rank.
- 9) Helping other authors by promoting their book comes back around and blesses you. How? Because you end up on their also-bought list. Something I just realized last week. For the last 8 months I've been promoting a lot of different Indie Authors to my fans...They bought the authors (some just to support Indie Authors...Cause they are cool that way.) I realized my books are now on the also-bought list all over the place.
- What Rick Gualtieri told me at the beginning of 2016 is absolutely true. Omnibuses don't take sales away from single books. I make more in one day for sales from my first book than I do for ALL THREE of the omnibuses combined.
- Covers #1 most important piece to selling your book one (1) time. Emotional

attachment to characters create salespeople out of your readers who go on to sell it multiple times for you.

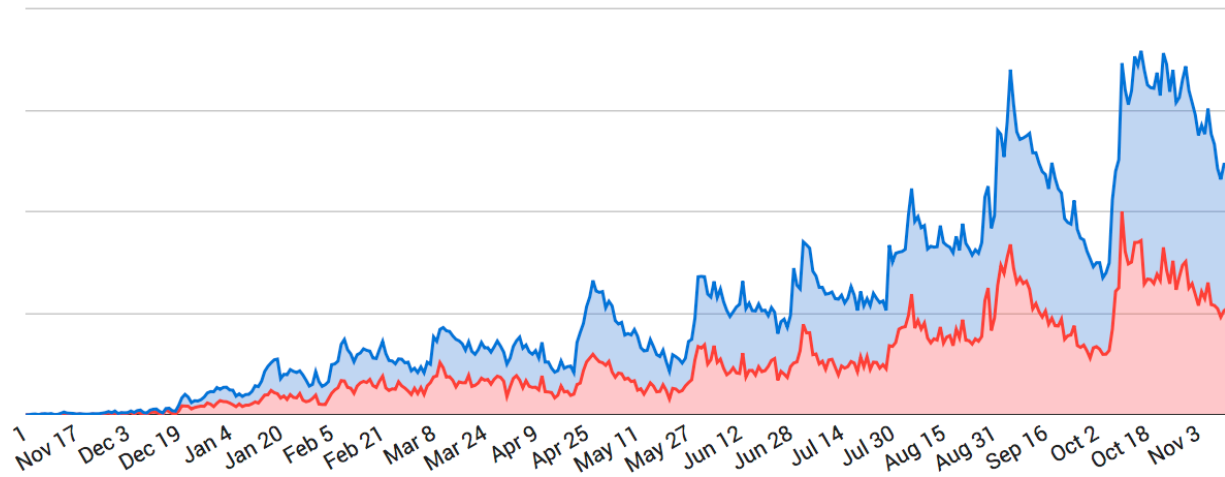
- Humorous pieces in books help sell the stories to spouses and friends.
- There's nothing like Snippets to keep the fans ravenous.
- For me, It's Facebook and Amazon Forums...Nothing else (Website is the place I load up my snippets, but I don't actively do conversations there.)
- I'm thankful I never took a writing course. My education was reading a 1,000 books and paying attention to what I liked, and what it made me *feel*. I listened to a writing course recently (a college level course), first example for show don't tell? *Bored the hell out of me*. But, remember, I'm perhaps a reader in an underserved reading group and my opinion doesn't mean anything for the bigger audience?
- Good covers are fine, Awesome covers are exponentially better (and exponentially more expensive). I used income from book sales to support my cover redesigns. Take care of your artists and they will take care of you.
- Between marketing and writing another book? I'll write another book. However, consider hacking this by joining anthologies and other items to get your name (and author ranking) up. Consider writing in a Kindle Worlds to get name recognition.

Items I have found out working with dozens of authors in the 20Booksto50K group on FB:

- NOTE: This has to do with making money with your craft and causing readers to want to re-read your books (my mountain) - If that isn't your mountain, then these may not apply to you.
- Passion Projects are usually the biggest impediment for authors. Just because you love something, doesn't mean enough readers you can find will (it doesn't mean it won't, either. You have to be willing to test and decide quickly.)
- Most authors never want to listen past the second time you tell them something isn't working. How some amazing Editors handle this, I have no idea. My hat is off to them.
- Stop asking Friends, Family, Editors, Other Authors... Publish it and let Readers tell you if something is working for F#%#s sake.
- Stop believing the masses (including me at times). If something is stressing you out, take a breather and regroup.
- Just because I can overwhelm some, don't hide what I'm doing or the results. The take-aways have less clarity when there is no money to gauge it.
- For my success, I should create success for others and continue to help.
- Need something? Ask fans, just realize not every fan is a good (insert role here...editor, advisor, altruistic individual).
- RECOGNIZE those that help you. Especially Beta Readers and other helpers in the front of your book. Also, arguing with them is counter-productive, don't do it.

- Mistakes are easily corrected, don't stress it.
- There is no magic recipe. But I will suggest it isn't your story, it's the emotional ride they are wanting to inject into their brain. Perhaps their drug of choice to feel these emotions they seek are Super Hero stories, or Paranormal, or Romance or (insert genre). In the end, they are seeking stories which trigger their pleasure centers.
- There are tactics to help make literary cocaine, learn them but don't abuse them.
- Let's pretend there are 20 great ideas running around in your brain and we write them down on twenty little pieces of paper and stick them in little plastic eggs. Now, six of these ideas are decent and two of those six are amazing. So, two (2) of them will catapult your career, how do you find the two as fast as possible? You have a 10% chance to hit the right series up front. How fast can you right 4 full novels? Can you hack that effort so you don't write dozens of books before you hit your series? That Backlist comment (yeah, but you will have a huge backlist!) some are thinking? I would opine hitting the best series faster is the preferred solution.

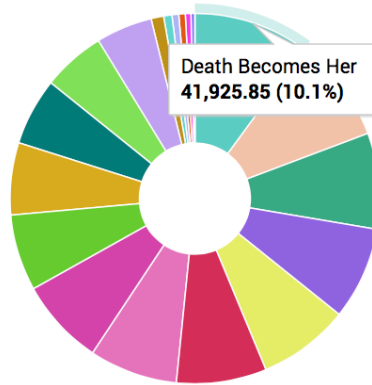
EARNINGS PER DAY – Since 11/1/2015



Note, September was (supposedly) the KENP debacle. My results might just be back to School situations, ads getting tired. I really don't know.

The main book income pie chart breakout since inception.

Earnings per Book



If you are wondering 'where is all of the breakout?'...Uh, no. This should be helpful and you have to leave a little mystery, right?

;-)

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20BooksTo50k